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# he GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE

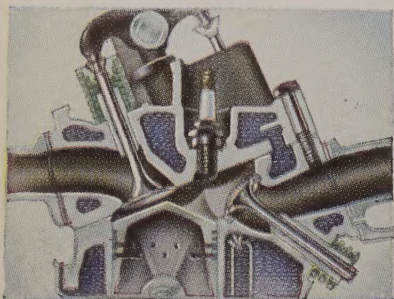
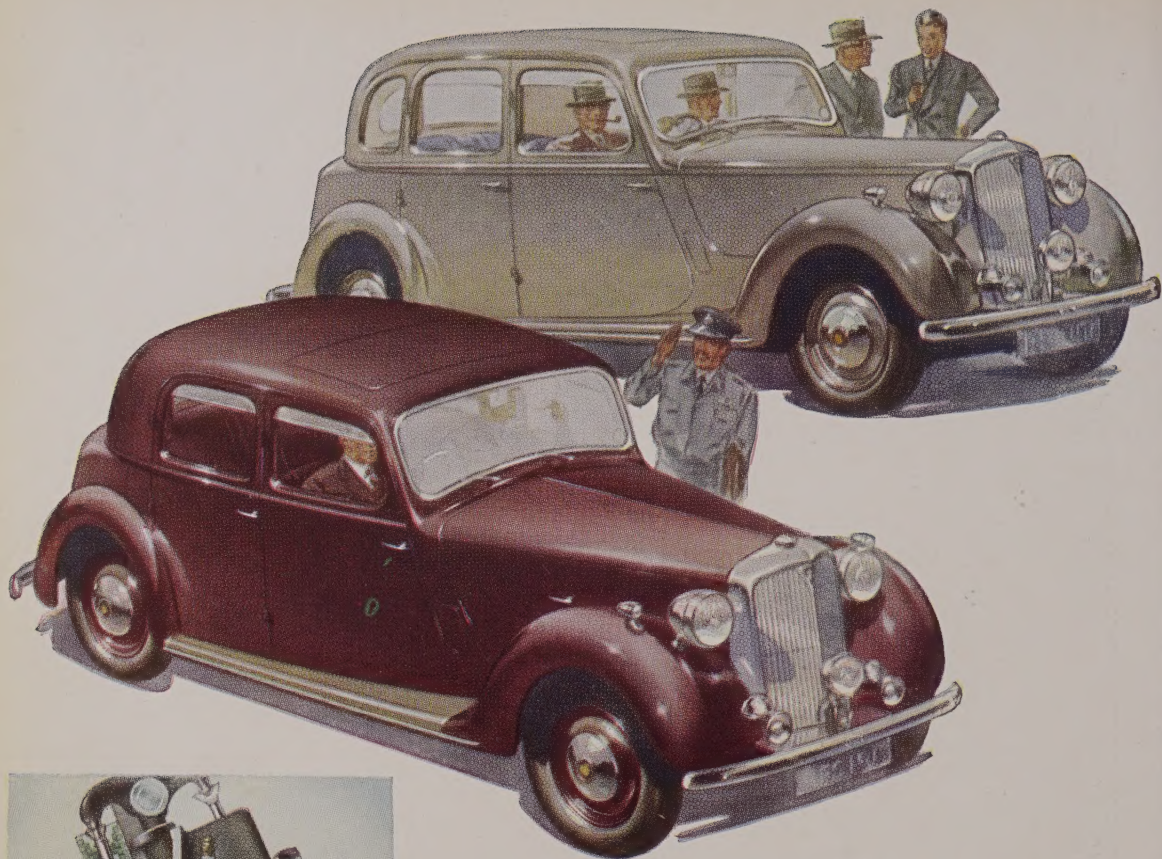


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# What's Wrong With Beaufort?

Introduction by JEAN DOISE

AGRICULTURE is one of the most important industries of France. The scarcity now prevailing has increased the value of its products, though even in 1938 the wheat crop was worth more than the output of metallurgy.

The land of France not only bears 'luxury' commodities—wines, spirits, fruit, vegetables, which are largely exported; it also yields basic foodstuffs: the wheat crop is second to that of Canada. But there are some dark corners in the picture; agriculture in France gives employment to about a third of the active part of the population, while the corresponding figures for Great Britain and the United States are respectively 6 per cent and 17.5 per cent. This means that the output per worker is lower in France than in other countries, as a result of the backwardness of farming methods. To get a clear view of the problem, however, it is necessary to consider some regional aspects.

Northern France, mainly the limestone plains, covered with superficial loam, between the river Loire and the Belgian border, is a very prosperous area, with large fully-mechanized farms. The pastures of Western France constitute another prosperous part of the country. There are also numerous small regions which enjoy a notable well-being on account of their highly specialized type of farming: vines, orchards, vegetables.

In the rest of France agriculture gives slender or even poor results. The yield of wheat in Lozère or Ariège (that is in the Massif Central and the Pyrenees) is hardly better than the yield of native farming in North Africa, three or four times less than in the North of France, Belgium or East Anglia. Here the methods are antiquated. Mixed farming, in spite of hard work, gives little money and poor crops, the largest part of which is consumed on the farm itself.

It is very difficult for the French Government to deal with agriculture because the same Act seldom suits equally the rich farmer of the North and the poor people of the South or East. The prosperous parts of France can be still more highly developed with new machinery or with better commercial organization. But the situation of the backward areas is serious and intricate.

Different factors are the cause of this: the soil is generally less fertile, the climate is sometimes less favourable (too dry, for example, on the Mediterranean shores), the

slopes are too steep for modern machinery or ruined by erosion. In those parts, too, there is a lack of the capital necessary to overcome the physical disadvantages of the land.

But the main cause is the subdivision of agricultural lands into small strips which are not fit for modern farming. This subdivision is mainly of mediæval origin and has lasted because the 'enclosure' movement has not been so complete in France as elsewhere. The laws of inheritance in the Code Napoléon enhanced the evil and it is noteworthy that the splitting up of the land into unworkable units is more acute in some parts where the old local laws enjoined equal sharing of estates a long time ago. The subdivision is fortunately less acute in Celtic Western France and in the Northern plains. In the Celtic regions the population is dispersed, each family living separately with the greater part of its fields around its dwelling. In the prosperous plains richer peasants and landowners have raised enough money to reunite their fields by purchasing strips.

It was calculated in 1919 that nearly 10,000,000 hectares (25,000,000 acres)—28 per cent of the agricultural land—ought to be amalgamated in larger units, this proportion increasing to 51 per cent of the land in Eastern France. Only in 1918 did the French Government try to solve this problem, with small results so far. Between 1919 and 1929 a little more than 6 per cent of the areas scheduled for grouping were enclosed, mainly in war-damaged parts of Northern and Eastern France. The process slowed down afterwards. Now, at last, without modifying the laws of inheritance, the French Government has built up an administrative machinery enabling the peasants to enclose their strips by mutual interchange. This was done for 100,000 hectares (250,000 acres) in 1947.

The Monnet Plan provides for ambitious changes in French agriculture:

- (1) to send one million peasants out of the poorest lands to new factories (the land being planted with forests or transformed into grazing land);
- (2) to send more peasants to the depopulated areas;
- (3) to improve agricultural methods and housing everywhere.

If the task is properly done France will both feed herself and make an important contribution to the feeding of Western Europe.





*Beaufort village (part of which is shown below), in the Drôme Department of south-eastern France, exemplifies some of the more pressing problems confronting the poorer French agricultural communities. Shortage of labour presents a major difficulty: sixty years ago Beaufort's population was well over 600; today there are barely 300 inhabitants. Division of land provides another obstacle; farms (left) are composed of many small and awkwardly scattered lots. The situation has been aggravated by the laws of inheritance in the Code Napoléon, under which strips of farming land have been divided again and again among the peasants' children*

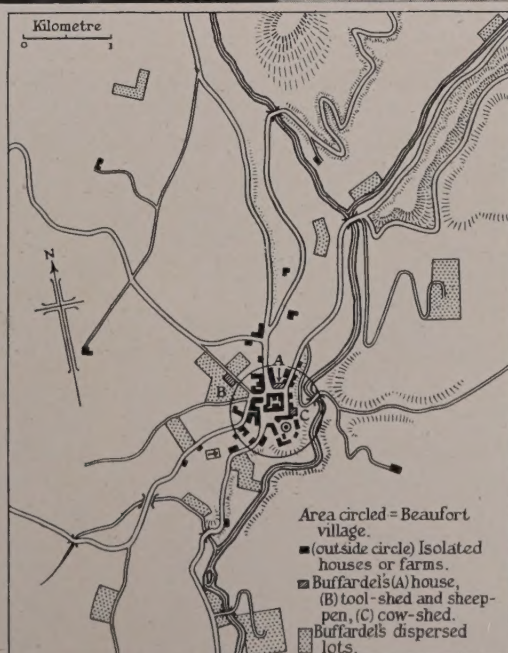
## Notes and Photographs by Édouard Mouriquand







*Alexandre Buffardel, who appears above with his wife, is a Beaufort farmer. Other members of the family living at home are a married son (he was absent for five years when a prisoner-of-war), his wife and two children. Buffardel is one of the community's biggest land-owners, for he has sixty acres; but only twenty-five of them are suitable for ploughing. Even that number should bring in a substantial crop; unfortunately, however, it consists of several scattered lots (as shown on the plan at the right), many of them miles apart and difficult of access*







*Agricultural machinery is scarce and expensive; in any case, the small size of many of Buffardel's lots (some consist of only an acre or two) precludes mechanized aid; consequently much of the work must (above) be done by hand. For drawing a cart from lot to lot (left) oxen are used, and occasionally even cows, as horses cost a fortune and often cannot negotiate the rough tracks*





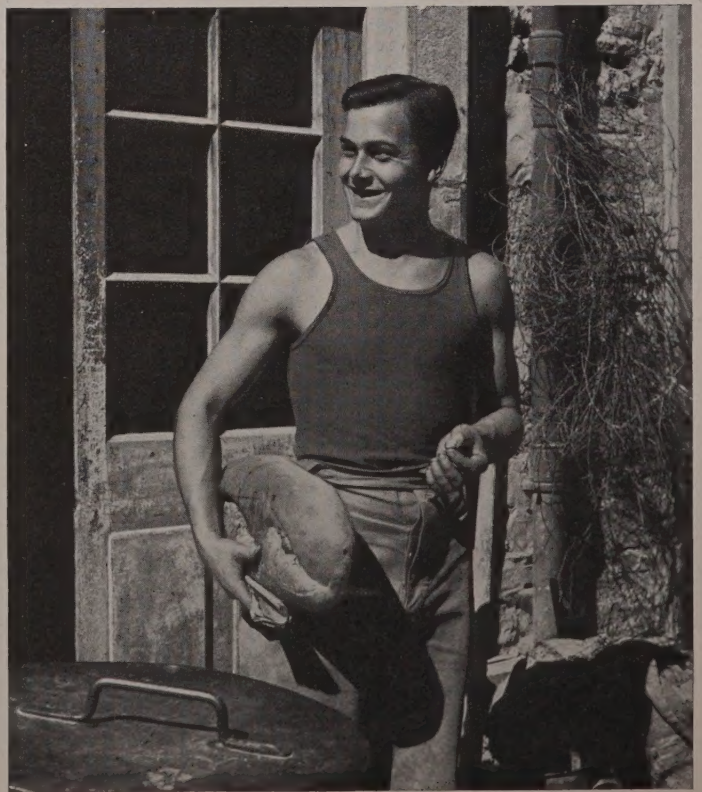
*At the end of a long day—a long trek home. At least one-fifth of Buffardel's time is taken up in getting to his fields and back; and since, lacking adequate machinery and labour, he is so dependent on his own manual efforts, this waste of hours and energy represents a high-percentage loss of produce and money*





(Left) Buffardel's grandson is assisted with the ploughing by a German prisoner-of-war. The Buffardel family is the only one in Beaufort that still has a prisoner-of-war to help on the farm; and they hope to persuade him to stay on with them after his release; otherwise the situation will become worse than ever, for there is a great scarcity of available French farm labourers, all of whom demand prohibitive wages. Formerly Buffardel was aided on the farm by his daughter, but recently she—

—married a Beaufort boy who took her to settle in Tunisia. He also has, in addition to the married son who still lives at home, (right) a younger son, Marcel, who used to work daily in his father's fields; but when Marcel was called up and went to do his military service in a city, he discovered the various amenities of town life: no Sunday work; no long hours of toil to get in the corn or hay; plenty of cinemas and dance-halls, and an annual holiday with pay. Small wonder that soon after he had returned home to Beaufort—







—where the only form of entertainment was provided by a single bowling-green, he decided to tell his father that he no longer wished to do farm-work and had found himself a job with the railway in the city. Several of his friends also came back to their family farms, bringing city girls as wives; but these girls, as well as local farmers' daughters, pined for a little fun and refused to stay in a village where the one sport available catered for 'men only' on the green!





# Australian Slang

by SIDNEY J. BAKER

Illustrations by HAL MISSINGHAM

*Two distinguished Australians have collaborated to produce the following article: Mr Baker is the author of A Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang; Mr Missingham is Director of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales and author of A Student's Guide to Commercial Art (Faber)*

BEFORE the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was exported to America as an anticipatory British sample of reverse lend-lease, that work kept a severe eye on the sanctity of the English tongue. Its concessions to unorthodox forms of speech were somewhat similar to the concessions of the Church to the more unfavourable aspects of human personality—an intolerant recognition, mainly evidenced by a restrained and reproving silence.

For this reason, the comment that the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia* gave to Australian speech habits was probably meant to indicate reproof rather than approbation. "Australia," the *Encyclopaedia* said, "as may be seen from the novels of Rolf Boldrewood and other writers, possesses an ample store of slang peculiar to itself, but of this *larrikin* is the only word that has found its way into general use in the mother country." Since *Webster's Dictionary*, which has become one of the main United States vehicles for sabotaging 'pure' English, had seen fit to devote a special supplement in its 1898 edition to Australian words, this may be regarded as a slight understatement. The London *Daily Chronicle* of November 22, 1905, had been more realistic. It said: "There are Australianisms enough to make a dictionary an essential to the proper understanding of an antipodean journal."

There is, however, one point in the quotation from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which makes it worth noting—this is the report that the word *larrikin*, which had been in use in Australia since the 1860s, had spread to Britain. This was only partially accurate. As Jago's *Glossary of the Cornish Dialect* (1882) points out, *larrikin* is a term of old Cornish vintage, used to describe "mischievous young fellows, larkers". The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was merely repeating an error which had been made in Barrère and Leland's *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant*, fourteen years earlier.

What had happened was this: early migrants to Australia had taken the word with them from Britain and it had found such wide application in Australia to describe street toughs or rowdies that, instead of remaining

a dialectal possession, it had acquired national characteristics. Consequently, both the English and the Australians came to believe the word was of Australian origin. This is by no means a new thing in language. Scores of words in American slang, which Americans regard as their own inventions, are revivals of old English words. Australia has many other examples of the same thing, among them *cobber*, a friend; *dinkum*, true, honest; *fossick*, an old mining term meaning to search for gold; *barrack*, which in sporting parlance means to shout or jeer at players or, conversely, to cheer on a side; and *swagman*, a tramp. All of these have well-defined English antecedents.

The fact is that the English have forgotten almost everything about them, while to the Australians they have become important parts of the antipodean vocabulary. The extent to which Australians have taken possession of these words is, perhaps, best shown by the way they have tampered with them. Thus, *larrikin* has been extended to *larrikiness*, a female rowdy, *larrikinalian*, describing the habits of larrikins, and *larrikinism*, hooliganism. In their turn these words are closely related to *lair*, a name given to a flashily-dressed hoodlum, and to the expression *lair up*, meaning to dress like a *lair*, or, more generally, merely to dress up for a festive occasion. *Cobber* has been extended to *cobbership*, friendship, and to the verb *cobber up*, to make friends with. *Dinkum* has been modified into *fair* (or *square*) *dinkum*, *dink*, *dinky*, *dinky die*, all of which mean honest or genuine, and even to *dinkumest*, which implies a superlative honesty.

In short, there is fair reason today in Australia's claim to call words such as *larrikin* and *cobber* her own. They are part of a vocabulary of about 10,000 new words which Australia has developed in her brief history of 160 years. These words are the sloughings of time, mementoes of the type of life Australia has made her own and of that particular flair which induced an American writer a few years back to comment: "When it comes to slang, the Australian can give us a head start and still win." An over-generous tribute, but with some small tincture of truth. It should





*Sundowner Waltzing Matilda*





*To make Bidgee: "mix methylated spirits and cheap wine (half and half), add a tablespoon of boot-polish (tan or brown), raisins, a little sugar and water, and just a soupçon of plug tobacco"*

not be thought that all these 10,000 words are slang or, if they were slang once, that they are necessarily slang today. Thousands of them now belong to orthodox Australian speech. A simple example is *digger*, used in modern times to describe an Australian soldier, which was inherited from gold-mining days when miners were called *diggers*. Equally orthodox today are words like *Australites*, a type of meteorite found in Australia, *Australorp*, a type of fowl developed in Australia, and *lerpamilum*, a chemical substance derived from a kind of manna secreted by an insect (called *lerp*, "sweet", by aboriginals).

*Lerp* is reputed to be the only native word that has found its way into scientific terminology, but there are many other terms that the Australian has borrowed, almost without alteration, from the aboriginals. Among them are *billabong*, a river pool, usually of seasonal formation; *boomerang*, the weapon (and figurative uses associated with this weapon's capacity to return); *bong*, dead, which is used

in the common phrase *go bung*, to become out of order or worthless; *corroboree*, applied originally to a native dance or ceremony, thence to a social gathering of any kind; *gooly*, a stone or pebble; *humfy*, *mia-mia* or *wurley*, a hut; *lubra*, a woman; *warrigal*, wild; *cooe*, a cry, and its associated term, *within cooe*, within calling distance; and *bunyip*, a mythical and highly fanciful animal of aboriginal legend.

To white men the Australian aboriginal is known as a *binghi*, *boong* or *abo*, although *boong* is mainly used for New Guinea natives. During World War II, when many men served in Pacific Islands warfare, the word *boong* acquired wide currency.

Australian slang grew as all slang grows: out of new experience, new problems to be faced and solved, new habits and interests, new relationships between men. The fact that so many of Australia's early white inhabitants were rejects from England gave the country an important linguistic start. Perhaps this



point can be understood better if it is pointed out that a dictionary of slang was compiled in Australia many years before America had one. This Australian product was the work of a convict, James Hardy Vaux. Twenty-four years after the First Fleet—as the original convict ships are known—arrived, Vaux compiled his *Vocabulary of the Flash Language* at Newcastle, New South Wales, during what he describes as his “solitary hours of cessation from hard labour”. This ‘vocabulary’ was included in his *Memoirs*, published in 1819. With this early start, Australia’s interest in unorthodox words and their invention has become firmly established. From almost every avenue of Australian life and from almost every corner of the continent have come new words, tossed with wild colonial indifference into what was once—according to legend, anyway—the Pure Well of English.

#### Examples?

Rural life offers you such terms as *back-blocks*, *outback* and *outside*, meaning remote, inland country; *brumby*, a wild horse; *bullocky*, a bullock-driver; *bushwhacker*, a country-dweller (this had American antecedents); *cockie*, a farmer, derived from the word cockatoo; *jackeroo*, a station hand; *boundary rider*, another station hand; *jumbuck*, a sheep (a name originally given by the aborigines); *squatter*, a large landholder, and its derivative, *squattocracy*, large landholders in general; *stock*, meaning specifically cattle, with its derivatives, *stockman*, *stockrider*, *stockroute*, *stockrun* and *stockwhip*; *settlers’ matches*, a name given to long, pendulous strips of bark hanging from eucalypts which are readily ignited and used as kindling; and *gully-raker*, a cattle thief or, alternatively, a long cattle whip.

From a long tradition of vagabondage—and work-hunting that involves establishment of vagabondage on a more or less formal basis—came words like *bicycle bum*, a seasonal worker who travels by cycle; *bluey*, *drum*, *swag* and *matilda*, names given to the roll of blanket and personal effects carried by a tramp; *sundowner*, a wanderer of indolent type who specialises in arriving at country homesteads at sundown to avoid working for rations; *Murrumbidgee whaler*, a loafer of more static type, living along the banks of the

Murrumbidgee River (and hence the country counterpart of Melbourne’s *Yarrabanker*, one who idles away his time on the banks of the Yarra River, and of Sydney’s *Domain dosser*, a loafer who sustains his fragile existence in Sydney’s central city park), and a multitude of phrases like *waltz matilda*, *hump the bluey*, *go on the wallaby*, which mean to go on the tramp.

The Murrumbidgee River, which cuts across southern New South Wales, has supplied some highly colourful expressions to the Australian language, among them *Murrumbidgee jam*, used to describe brown sugar moistened with cold tea and spread on *dampier* (unleavened bread baked in wood ashes), and *bidgee*, a drink in which methylated spirits is the main element. To make an authentic concoction of *bidgee* (guaranteed to make a social success of any festive occasion) mix methylated spirits and cheap wine (half and half), add a tablespoon of bootpolish (tan or brown), raisins, a little sugar and water, and just a soupçon of plug tobacco. English folk may suspect some relationship between



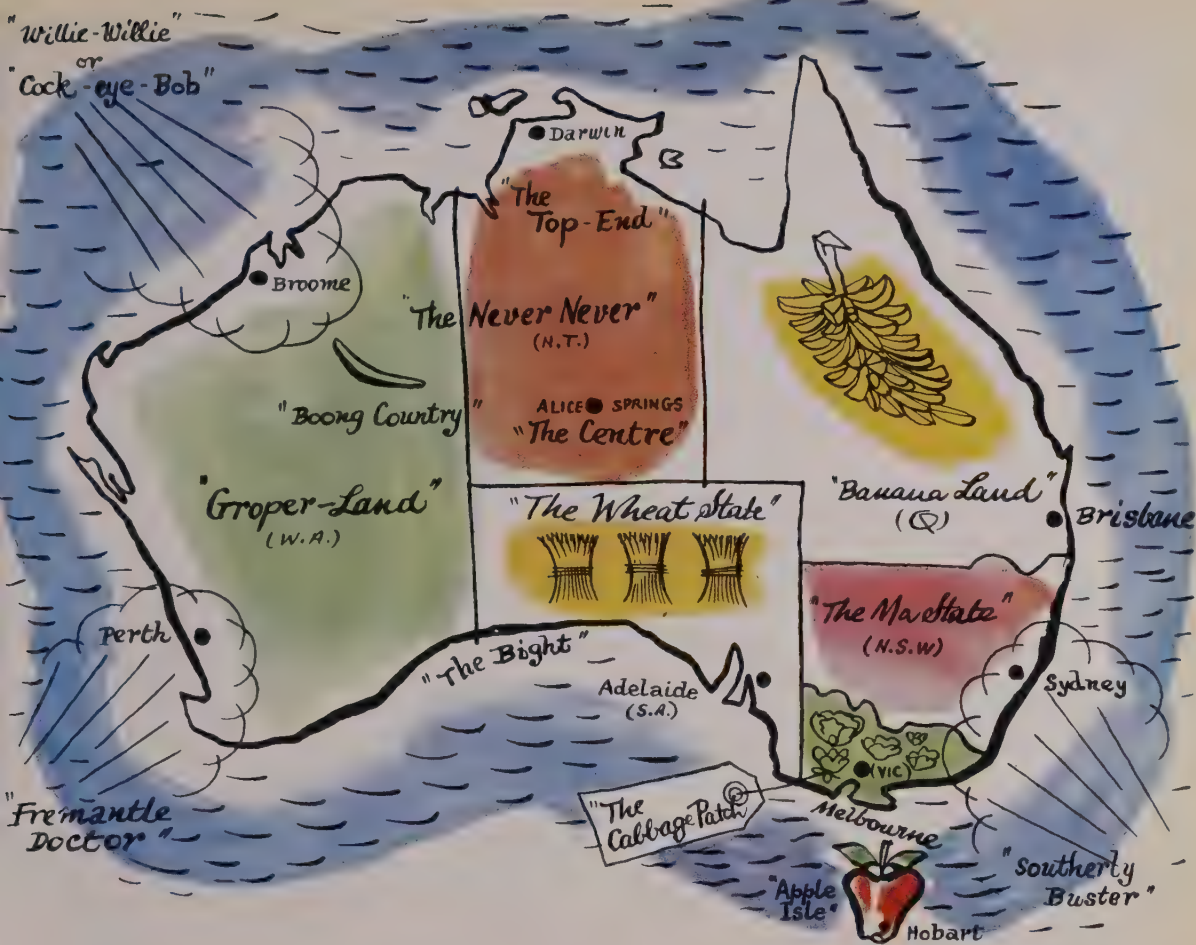
*Wowser and a couple of Lairs*





*The Bushman's Clock (Kookaburra or Laughing Jackass)*





bidgee and the "red biddy" of Britain.

For general descriptive purposes, the Australian environment and its occupants have been re-arranged colloquially with terms like *Apple Island*, *Tassie* and *The Speck*, meaning Tasmania; *Banaland*, Queensland; *New South* and *The Ma State*, New South Wales (oldest state in the Commonwealth); *The Cabbage Garden* (or *Patch*), Victoria, so-named because of its small size (about equal to that of Great Britain); *The Top End*, the Northern Territory or northern Australia in general; *The Wheat State*, South Australia; *Westralia* and *Groperland*, Western Australia; *Dead Heart*, *The Centre*, *Red Centre* and *Never Never*, the far inland desert areas; *Sydneysider* or *Waler*, a resident of New South Wales; *Groper*, *Sandgroper* or *Tothersider*, a Western Australian; *Croweater* or *Magpie*, a South Australian (from the large numbers of these birds in that state); *Banaland*, a Queensland; and *Topender*, a resident of the far north.

Many similar terms litter the landscape.

Thus, a westerly gale in mid or south Queensland has become known as a *Barcoo Buster* (a variation of the *Southerly Buster*, a gale from the south, known in New South Wales); a refreshing sea breeze that blows into Fremantle and Perth after a hot day is called a *Fremantle Doctor*; and duststorms are called, in various parts of the country as indicated by the change in operative names, *Darling shower*, *Cobar shower*, *Bedourie shower* and *Wilcannia shower*. In these places, according to local legends, the crows fly backwards to keep the dust out of their eyes! Among other atmospheric incidentals experienced in Australia are the *Cock-eye-Bob*, or cyclone, of north-west Australia, and the *Willie-Willie*, also a storm of cyclonic type, well known in the inland.

One of the first tasks that faced Australia's pioneers was the putting in order of the country's lavish flora and fauna. In the process, more than 4000 specialized Australian terms came into being. These terms, of course, are orthodox, but the orthodox has



always disturbed the Australian, so he has gone a long way towards renaming his country's flora and fauna with more colloquial words. Hence such names for the Kookaburra as *laughing jackass*, *jack*, *jacko*, *clockbird*, *bushman's clock*, *breakfast bird*, *kooka* and *ha ha pigeon*; and this list by which the Grey-Crowned Babbler is known: *apostle bird*, *barker*, *cat-bird*, *cackler*, *codlin-moth-eater*, *chatterer*, *dog-bird*, *happy family*, *happy jack*, *hopper*, *jumper*, *parson-bird*, *twelve apostles* and *yahoo*. Some more samples: *Brainfever*, the Pallid Cuckoo; *Bubbly Mary*, the Wampoo Pigeon; *Cranky Fan*, the Grey Fantail; *Monk* and *Poor Soldier*, the Noisy Friar-bird; *Squeaker*, the Noisy Miner; and *Telper*, the Red-necked Avocet.

Where slang grows, so does metaphor. Many lively descriptive phrases have been wrested from the Australian environment. For example: *balmy as a bandicoot*, *bald as a bandicoot*, and *miserable as a bandicoot*, which, needless to say, are gross libels on a sagacious little marsupial; *to have kangaroos in one's top paddock* or *to be as mad as a gumtree full of galahs*, to be silly or crazy (a foolish person is often called a *galah*, after the name of the garrulous bird); *like a possum up a gumtree*, meaning completely happy; *flat out like a lizard drinking*, which has little to do with lizards, but which is an elaboration of the idea behind 'flat out', meaning in a hurry or making a great effort; *tough as fencing wire* and *rough as bags*, which more or less mean what they say; and such explosive phrases as *stone the crows!* *speed the wombats!* *starve the mopokes!* (the *mopoke*, or *morepork*, is a bird) and *stiffen the lizards!*

There are enough terms of this nature to make the formal clichés of the English language almost superfluous—to the Australian if to no one else. They serve as a tribute both to the originality and to the limitations of the Australians.

As a concluding round-up here are a few of the hundreds of terms which are to be found in everyday use in Australia: *ratbag*, an eccentric or stupid person; *to white ant*, to sabotage; *push*, a gang or clique; *lurk* or *rort*, a racket; *on the compo*, in receipt of workers' compensation payments; *to poke borak at* or *to chynack*, to tease (this use of *borak* is believed to be related to the verb *barrack* mentioned earlier); *ropeable*, angry; *sheila* or *sort*, a girl; *to put the hard word on*, to make a firm demand to someone (*to put the hard word on a sort* scarcely needs pedantic explanation); *dilly-bag*, a shopping bag; *back of Bourke*, far away (a phrase mainly used in New South Wales in which Bourke is an outback town); *Pommy*, an Englishman; *game as Ned Kelly*, foolhardily courageous (honouring a bushranger named Edward Kelly); *home on the pig's back*, said of something completed easily; *who's robbing this coach?*, mind your own business! (another phrase allegedly inherited from bushranging days); *yacker*, work; *ziff*, a beard; *snags*, sausages, and of course that indispensable word *wowser*, a puritan or blue-stocking, of which a Sydney editor was once moved to write: "If Australia had given nothing more to civilization than that magnificent label for one of its most melancholy products, it would not have been discovered in vain."



*A Domain Dossier*





All photographs by the author

Ektachrome

*A Common Tern—one of the four species of terns found at Ravenglass—nesting on sand and shingle*

## Bird Life at Ravenglass

by A. F. PARK, F.R.P.S.

*Mr Park has studied and photographed birds for many years. In his book Making Friends with Birds published by Chatto & Windus he describes his method, which is to find birds of the right temperament, gain their confidence, and then photograph them at close range without a 'hide'*

THREE small rivers, the Mite, the Irt and the Esk, reach the sea at Ravenglass, in Cumberland, forming at their confluence a wide, sweeping estuary, at high tide covered by the sea, at low tide an area of mud flats and runnels. Across the estuary lies a long line of sand-hills, lonely and desolate during the greater part of the year, but transformed when spring arrives, for here the Black-headed Gulls congregate and nest in vast numbers. Ravenglass colony is the largest in Britain, the gull population being estimated at about 100,000 pairs.

Gulls, in general, are birds of the sea,

spending most of their time on the oceans and usually nesting on sea-cliffs and islands. The Black-headed Gull is somewhat different, living at times by salt water but also favouring fresh water, preferring to nest inland around moorland swamps and tarns. This Ravenglass site, on sand-dunes by the sea, is thus rather exceptional. Why, then, should it be so favoured?

The explanation lies in the ecological conditions found here—conditions approaching the ideal in respect of the two main essentials: food supplies and nesting sites. Food is the primary consideration; food readily acces-





Kodachrome

(Above) A Black-headed Gull observing her eggs, which are chipping. There is much variation in colour among the eggs, some being richly marked in browns and greens, others of paler shades. (Below) The mottled chicks will leave the nest a day or two after hatching and run about for three or four weeks before they begin to fly



Kodachrome





*Black-headed Gulls, estimated at 100,000 pairs, occupy an area of sand-hills at Ravenglass of about a square mile in extent. Though thousands nest in the hollows and lower areas they seem to prefer the exposed, wind-swept summits, doubtless because they can see better what is going on*

sible and available in abundance to support such a vast population. Both conditions are fulfilled. The chicks are fed on caterpillars, wireworms and sundry insect food, obtainable in adequate supplies from the mainland, just across the estuary; while the undulating sand-hills, covered with tufts of marram-grass, provide the requisite cover and protection for the nests and ideal terrain in which the chicks can hide and run about. Sand has another advantage: being porous, it affords excellent drainage and consequent immunity to flooding; and as it also dries quickly after rain, the chicks escape the ordeal of a prolonged soaking which would result from running about in wet grass.

Terns, Oyster Catchers and Ringed Plovers also find the site admirable, with its large areas of sand and shingle on which to nest and plentiful food supplies, fished for in sea or tidal river, or gleaned on the mud-flats.

The sand-hills form part of a protected bird sanctuary; protection is essential, for without it no bird colony could survive, unless inaccessible. Take, for example, the Penrith

area, where the gulleries lacked adequate protection. The gulls suffered so much persecution, such persistent depletion of their eggs, that they deserted their old quarters and joined forces with the Ravenglass gulls in 1947 and there found sanctuary.

At Ravenglass the birds thrive and prosper under the care of the Warden, Mr Joe Farren, who has looked after his charges assiduously for the last thirty-three years. Those who think they can hoodwink a bird-watcher had better not try it on with Joe, for he knows all the tricks! A proportion of the eggs of the first laying is collected for the London market. This is done systematically, without detriment to the birds, which are able to maintain their numbers, being left undisturbed to rear their chicks from the second clutches.

About a square mile of sand-dunes, roughly triangular in shape, is occupied by the gulls. The setting is most picturesque, and is seen at its best in sunshine. The golden sand-hills with their growth of marram and the sunlit whites of the flying birds against the purple background of the Eskdale mountains, pro-





*Sandwich Terns returning to their colony at Ravenglass. These birds nest among the gulls in communities ranging from a few pairs to several score. A number of gulls may be seen on the ground in the above photograph*



vide a scene of colour and animation which will delight the most critical. The area is broken and hummocky, some of the hills being quite lofty, interspersed with lower mounds, hollows and inlets. The gulls constitute one huge colony, nesting in varying concentrations. Though thousands nest in the hollows and lower areas they seem to prefer the exposed and windswept summits, doubtless because they can see better what is going on around them. The high dunes on the seaward side are much favoured.

Constructed of dead marram, the unlined nests are very primitive and sketchy affairs though occasional examples are more substantial. In areas of nettles the birds utilize the dead stems, some of which are two or three feet in length, resulting in abnormally large and sprawling nests. While most of the nests are fairly close together, one finds here and there an isolated nest built on driftwood or even on shingle or sand,

quite apart from the crowd.

Among the eggs, which average two or three in a clutch, there is great variation in colouring. The prevailing type is brownish; some in rich, deep shades, boldly blotched, others in paler tones, with less conspicuous markings, ranging to pastel shades of fawn. Another type runs through a similar range of greens with every combination of green and brown.

The birds are as handsome as their eggs. At first glance the head appears black, but closer inspection, particularly in sunshine, reveals a chocolate-brown colouring. This is the summer or nuptial plumage, the pigment of which is lost in the autumn, the head being white, or nearly so, in winter. The flight is graceful and rather tern-like; the birds swoop at intruders, though not actually striking, to the accompaniment of a deafening clamour.

Chicks begin to appear about mid-June—

*Compared with the downy chicks of other terns, those of the more rare Sandwich Tern present a somewhat hairy appearance, particularly on the head and neck. Also, their colouring is lighter*







*For thirty-three years the birds at Ravenglass have thrived under the care of the Warden, Mr Joe Farren. Each year a proportion of the gulls' eggs is systematically collected for the London market, but without detriment to the birds, which are left undisturbed to rear their chicks from second clutches. Mr Farren is particularly zealous in his care of the rare Sandwich Terns and they are increasing steadily in number*

lovely, downy little creatures in soft shades of brown, broadly mottled in deeper brown. Within a day or two of hatching they leave the nests and run about for three or four weeks before they begin to fly. By the beginning of August most of them are on the wing and have found their way to the mainland. They reach maturity in two to three years.

I mentioned that their food was brought from the mainland, so that one would expect to see a constant procession of parents over the estuary. I often wondered why no such procession was evident until enlightened by Joe Farren one day. He pointed out a pile of caterpillars—fully sixty or seventy—lying on one of the nests. Thus was the mystery explained: they had been collected and swallowed by the parent, then regurgitated close to the chick, which, after gorging to repletion, was hiding near the nest. He told me that he

has seen even greater clumps of caterpillars and at other times wireworms, often away from the nests, brought to the chicks wherever they happened to be. The caterpillars I saw were fresh and intact, in no way broken up by digestion.

Now take a look at the terns, of which four species nest here: the Arctic, Common, Lesser and Sandwich. All terns are migrants, spending the winter on the shores of Africa and the Arabian Sea, etc., arriving in Britain in late April and May. Graceful, light and buoyant in flight, terns are rightly renowned for their elegance. With their long forked tails, powerful wings, swift and dexterous flight, these "sea swallows" are aptly named. They are expert fishers, hovering in butterfly fashion, then making a headlong vertical dive on the prey.

Both Common and Arctic Terns are numer-





*An Arctic Tern. Graceful and buoyant in flight, the terns are renowned for their elegance. These "sea swallows" are expert fishers, hovering in butterfly-fashion, then making a headlong vertical dive on the prey*



ous at Ravenglass; most of the eggs being found on the sand and shingle on the foreshore, well above the tide line, or among shingle and short grass in the inlets. Such nests as are built are very rudimentary—a few stray grasses or pieces of seaweed—but as often as not the eggs are just laid in a hollow, frequently among broken shells. The Common Tern is more inclined to nest-building than the Arctic.

Both species breed socially, so the nests are often found close together. It is difficult to distinguish between the eggs, which in the case of each species are stone-coloured in varying hues, blotched and marked in dark brown, those of the Arctic tending to bolder markings. The eggs are supposed to range from two to four, but I have never seen a complement exceeding three at this site, where twos are just as numerous.

So similar in appearance are Common and Arctic Terns that it is difficult to distinguish one from another. Both are some fifteen inches in length, with black caps, white under-parts and grey mantles. It is not so easy to discern the longer legs of the Common; the bill affords the readiest clue: both have red bills but that of the Common is black-tipped in summer. As in the manner of gulls, terns will swoop at intruders but some also strike vigorously with their powerful bills.

The dainty Lesser Tern, found here in small numbers, is readily distinguished by its white forehead and its size (length about nine inches). The eggs have dark brown spots on a light stone ground and are sometimes confused with those of the Ringed Plover. They are laid in depressions among shingle, sometimes so near the high-water mark that they are washed away by abnormal tides. The wing beats are more rapid than the average among terns and this species does not strike.

There is one group of birds to which Joe Farren gives special attention: the beautiful Sandwich Tern. For many years he has recorded the number of eggs, smudging them with indelible pencil to render them valueless for collections. The birds have steadily increased, about 800 being recorded in 1947. They are slightly larger than the Arctic and the plumage on the head lies so loosely as to form a slight crest on the back of the black cap. They are not addicted to swooping or striking.

The Sandwich Terns nest among the gulls, keeping to themselves in compact and well-defined colonies ranging from a few pairs to several score. They prefer low, flat, sandy plateaux where the marram is thin and scanty; the positions of the colonies vary

from year to year. In 1947 the largest communities were found at about the middle of the gully, but the two main sites in 1948 were established at the southerly tip, opposite Ravenglass. On the whole the gulls are fairly tolerant of their dainty neighbours but should they be annoyed through too much disturbance they will attack the terns' eggs, piercing and often devouring them. With such a preponderance of gulls it is rather surprising that the terns can hold their own.

Most of the Sandwich Terns' eggs are laid on bare sand, though in some cases empty gulls' nests are utilized. The eggs are very handsome—the most striking of all terns' eggs—the black and brown markings being seen to great advantage on the whitish background. Their number ranges from one to three, twos being slightly more numerous. The chicks differ from those of other terns, not only in respect of their lighter colour but also in their appearance being somewhat hairy, particularly on head and neck.

Oyster Catchers are sure to draw our attention as they fly around with their noisy "kleep, kleep". The black-and-white pattern together with pink legs and long orange bill, provide a striking ensemble. As they feed on the mud flats they are fairly tame, moving a short distance away as one approaches. At nesting time they are shy, readily leaving their eggs and not returning until the intruder has retired a considerable distance.

As danger approaches they can be seen running away from their nests (they don't readily take to flight at such times) which can sometimes be located by tracing backwards along the birds' course. There is no attempt at nest-building, the eggs being laid in slight depressions in the sand or among shingle and stones; there are three as a rule, sometimes only two and occasionally four. Buff in background colour, profusely spotted, blotched and scribbled with brownish-black, the eggs harmonize beautifully with their broken surroundings.

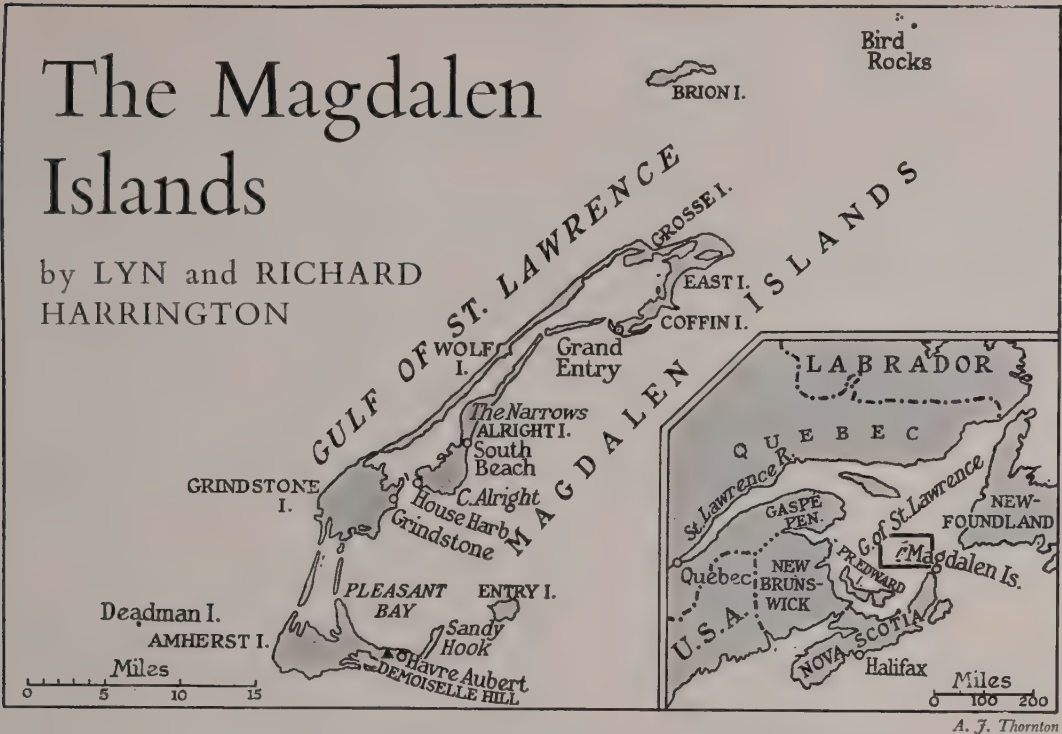
In similar places the Ringed Plovers lay their delicate little eggs, resembling those of the Lesser Tern—a light shade of grey, profusely peppered with dark spots. There is something very fairylike about this little plover, only some seven inches in length, with a prominent black band round breast and neck, almost invisible as it runs among the shingle.

Such are the principal inhabitants of this lovely sanctuary. Joe Farren is crossing the estuary so, reluctantly, I take a last look at the vast assembly.



# The Magdalen Islands

by LYN and RICHARD HARRINGTON



In the Gulf of St Lawrence, about half-way between Newfoundland and New Brunswick, lie the Magdalen Islands, their treacherous sand-bars, shoals and rocky cliffs providing long-dreaded perils to river-bound shipping in this area of severe gales and fogs and earning for them the title, "Graveyard of the St Lawrence". Jacques Cartier discovered the islands in 1534; and in 1626 Champlain passed a night at, and

named, Havre Aubert on Amherst Island. By this time Basque, Breton and Norman fishermen were making regular trips to the islands for seal and walrus oil, English efforts to obtain a share being sharply repulsed. Repeated attempts at colonization failed and not until "New France" had become British were permanent settlements established under various auspices. At first given to Newfoundland, the Magdalens now

form part of Gaspé County in Quebec Province. The sixteen islands, half of them linked together by sand-dunes, are mostly bordered by cliffs composed at the lower levels of soft red sandstone, carved into strange formations by the sea, and higher up of hard grey sandstone. Volcanic hills rise in symmetrical domes and birds abound on their heights. Of a total of 55,000-odd acres, diminished steadily by the sea's inroads, slightly more than a third is arable. The population (of about 10,000) is chiefly French-speaking, though certain communities are entirely English-speaking. Perfect harmony prevails between the two peoples



Havre Aubert dock; the Magdalen has arrived from Nova Scotia





(Above) A young French-Canadian girl surveys Havre Aubert from the base of a cross erected in 1934 on Demoiselle Hill in honour of Jacques Cartier's discovery of Amherst Island four hundred years before. Havre Aubert, providing a small, safe port for shipping, is county town of the Magdalens. The main road leading to the port winds through (left) 'Fishtown'; here merchants' storage-sheds and the fishermen's shacks and cook-houses are strung out along a sand-bar





(Above) The dock at Grindstone, business capital of the Magdalens. Communication between the islands and with the mainland is chiefly by ship; but there is also a regular bi-weekly aeroplane service, started in 1927, much to the relief of the Madelinots, whose only contact with the mainland in winter had been by cablegram. Passengers and mail are flown between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and the wide beach (right) to the northwest of Grindstone Island







*From Grindstone Island a covered bridge, here seen (left) in the background, crosses over to House Harbour (or Havre-aux-Maisons), the largest village of Alright Island. This island's population is almost entirely composed of Acadians (descendants of the families who originally came to these islands after their expulsion from Acadia);\* they pasture cattle and sheep in the hilly interior or engage in the local vigorous fishing industry. When the ferryboat calls at House Harbour with passengers for the island, the pier is crowded with interested onlookers*

*(Right) A recent inhabitant of one of the crates shown (above) attached to the pier awaiting collection for Alright Island's extensive cannery works. The lobster is undisputed king of the crustacea in the Magdalens, where fishing and the allied canning and curing industries are of primary economic importance*







*Sturdy little horses pulling two-wheeled carts, which are used throughout the Magdalens by fishermen and farmers, help (above) to bring in lobster-traps at South Beach, Alright Island. At the end of the season quantities of these traps are to be seen stacked up at most ports, including (below) that at Grand Entry*







(Above) Magdalen Island fishermen near Cape Alright; Entry Island can be seen in the background across Pleasant Bay. Throughout this area vast numbers of mackerel and lobster are caught close to shore; hooded seals are also captured in spring when the ice breaks up. (Left) Off with their heads! The day's herring catch is prepared for sale to a nearby canning factory. The refuse will also be sold; it is made into fertilizer for use on the islands' estimated 20,000 arable acres. Agriculture is gaining favour amongst fishermen-farmers, but they usually grow only enough for their families





*Communication between the Magdalen depends mainly on small boats which transport passengers across Pleasant Bay or up the lagoon from Grindstone Island to Grosse Ile and to Grand Entry on Coffin Island; but roads already exist on the larger islands and one is now being built to link up all the islands of the main group. These photographs show the fill-in being made across the lagoon from Alright Island at the Narrows to the sand-dune that leads on, first to Wolf Island and then to Grosse Ile. The rock of which the road is constructed has to be hauled over long distances by truck*







*The Magdalen Island village of Grand Entry has a weather-beaten appearance, few of its buildings being painted. Two wells (one may be seen in the above photograph) supply the community, which boasts a hotel, a refrigeration plant and a fish-canning and -packing industry, as well as (right) a busy harbour, frequented by local shipping, and also by big two-masted schooners from New Brunswick*



*All photographs by Richard Harrington*



# British Artists Abroad

## V. Roberts in Spain, Egypt and Palestine

by GRAHAM REYNOLDS

*Having shown how British artists of the 18th and early 19th centuries responded to fresh environments in the South Seas and China, in India and in Italy, Mr Reynolds now comes to the artist-topographers of a world about to be opened to tourism, especially the Mediterranean and the Levant*

WHEN David Roberts was a boy he read in a book on fortune-telling that the mole on his leg foretold that he would be a great traveller. As his parents were very poor no prophecy could have seemed less likely of fulfilment, and yet it was met to the letter. Nor indeed did it seem probable that he would rise to artistic fame from the discouraging surroundings of the cobbler's shop near Edinburgh in which he was born in 1796; but he took the first step along that road when, after an early display of fondness for scribbling on the walls of his tenement home, he was apprenticed to a house-painter.

He attained a step closer to his goal when his seven years' apprenticeship in this trade was ended, for then he was able to transfer to scene-painting. This was in the year 1816. While carrying out his work for the theatre with considerable success he had his first experience of travel, from Edinburgh to the larger towns in the North of England. Eventually his proficiency was recognized by his appointment to responsible posts in London, where he worked successively for Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Meanwhile he had started to paint in oils and had exhibited in Scottish exhibitions, with immediate and rapidly advancing success. In the early 19th century Scotland was in the ferment of an artistic renaissance; schemes for a national association of artists were on foot, and Scottish patrons were eager to assist their countrymen and to acquire views of Scottish antiquities. The first pictures which David Roberts sold were picturesque representations of Melrose Abbey, New Abbey, Dumfriesshire, Roslin Chapel and views of Edinburgh. His proficiency was to grow quickly, and the contents of his paintings to become more and more exotic as he travelled farther afield, but the basic essentials of his treatment of those scenes remained what it was in these early works. The central feature is always a building interesting through its age and decay, and he presents a broad impression of it without meticulous delineation of architectural detail.

The first opportunity Roberts had to widen the range of his subjects came from a brief visit to Normandy in 1824. The Gothic splendours of Rouen Cathedral and St Jacques, Dieppe, were just what Roberts had sought, and he was able to sell many paintings based on his sketches of these buildings. He was, however, anxious to explore broader horizons, and as soon as he could safely cut adrift from scene-painting and art exhibitions he went to Spain in 1832 in quest of Moorish architecture.

Spain and Portugal were then coming on to the map of fashionable travel. Eccentrics such as William Beckford had even in the 18th century found in the Peninsula the fulfilment of their romantic dream, or at least a consolation for exile from England. Wellington's campaigns had evoked a more widespread curiosity in this as yet little known part of Europe. Five years before Roberts paid his visit David Wilkie had been there and was profoundly impressed as much by the paintings of Velasquez as by the *mise-en-scène*. John Frederick Lewis was another British artist who was in Spain at the same time as David Roberts; and these men were the forerunners of Delacroix and Manet, whose travels to Spain helped to change the course of modern painting.

Roberts returned to England with a great number of sketches of Madrid, Cordova, Seville and Granada and found ample demand for them. In the early 19th century a new public for topographical publications had sprung up. Periodicals akin to our modern illustrated magazines were replacing the costly and limited editions designed for circulation among scholars and the libraries of country houses. The position of the artist had changed, too; instead of travelling as a servant in the retinue of a grandee or undertaking an officially sponsored mission he travelled by himself and at his own risk. David Roberts is an excellent and successful exemplar of this type of 19th-century private enterprise. The chief reason for his sustained





All reproductions by courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum

Roberts wrote: "*The Ghawazees are dancing girls who perform unveiled in the public streets. They are never admitted to a respectable hareem, for they are among the most abandoned of courtesans*"

success was the continued novelty of his subject matter; he brought Spain, and later Egypt, to a public sated with picturesque tours of Normandy and the Rhine.

From the sketches of his Spanish tour he supplied *Jennings' Landscape Annuals* for several years. In these *Annuals* his drawings were engraved in smaller size on steel by the admirable craftsmen who had been taught by J. M. W. Turner to render the finest nuance of detail and atmosphere. From the same series of sketches was prepared, on a larger scale, the lithographic *Picturesque Views in Spain*. The interior of the mosque of Cordova, reproduced here from this attractive set, gives a favourable impression of the artist's comprehension of the intricacy of Moorish arcading and his ability to combine with it a broad treatment of the Baroque altarpiece behind.

When he had sufficiently reaped the harvest of his Spanish voyage Roberts left in 1838 on a longer and more adventurous journey to Egypt, Palestine and Syria. He had already worked up drawings of many scenes in these

lands from sketches by amateur draughtsmen; and further behind his wish to visit Palestine was the religious sentiment implanted by the Bible-teaching he had been given in boyhood.

Egyptology was then in its heroic phase; it was fifty years since Napoleon had reminded the world of the greatness that had been Ancient Egypt; the deciphering of inscriptions had been mastered only twenty years before, and Wilkinson's classical and stimulating *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* had appeared in 1837.

Roberts made his journey up the Nile by boat, having first, in a gesture worthy of his island race, drowned the vermin with which it was infested by having it sunk for a night in the Nile and well scrubbed. He stopped to draw all the monuments of which he had heard from the Pyramids and the Sphinx, past the temples of Karnak and Luxor, and as far as Abu Simbel, the extreme point of his exploration. Though he normally kept his imagination well within bounds, he could not





*From Spain Roberts brought back many picturesque sketches, such as this interior of the mosque at Cordova in which Moorish arcading contrasts with a Baroque altarpiece and a scene of Christian worship*



*Roberts' early training as a scene-painter gave him the power to express the gigantic scale of the ruined monuments of Ancient Egypt, which is well shown in his view of the Grand Portico at Philæ—*





David Roberts

—and in his interior of the temple at Abu Simbel with its colonnade of colossal stone statues.  
“They seemed to sit there waiting for some great summons which should awaken and reanimate them”



*Roberts recorded that the little island of Philæ in the Nile, here seen from the neighbouring island of Biggè, was a paradise in the midst of desolation*



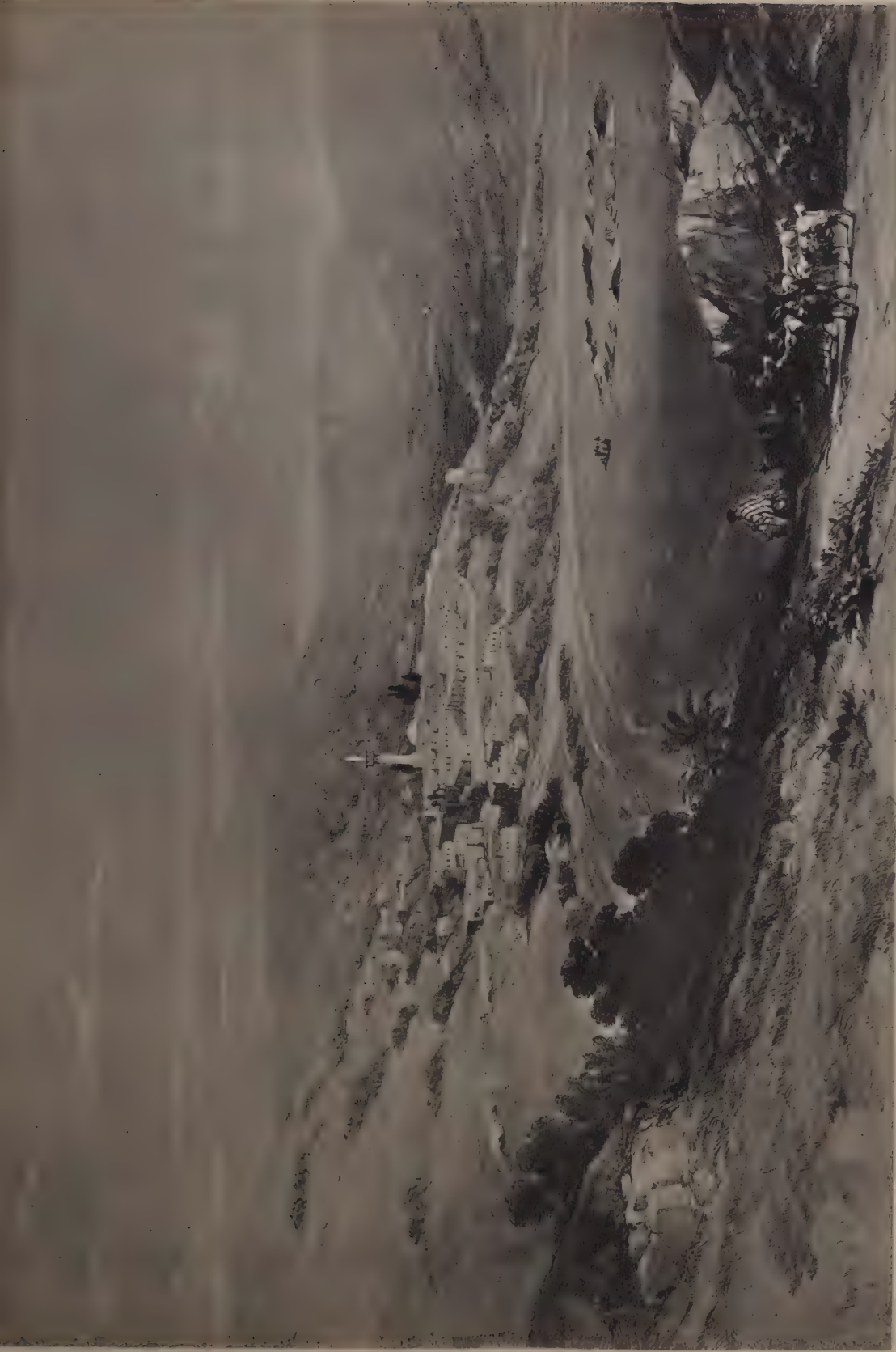


*A party overtaken by the Simoon. "It so obscures the sun, or refracts his light, that he appears enlarged and of a blood-red colour, lurid and appalling"*



*Roberts and his party claimed to be the first European travellers permitted to pitch their tents amid Petra's ruins, in return for the payment of a tribute*





*He drew Nazareth surrounded by its hills with a religious reverence, but did not omit the note of colour provided by a circular encampment of the Arabs*



*At the convent of St Catherine, which Roberts drew in all the grandeur of its situation at the foot of Mount Horeb, the Christian monks and Mohammedans followed their religions in harmony side by side*



fail to be impressed by what he saw; and he meditated, in the ruins of Dendera, "I felt sad and solitary—not a soul but myself, and my black guide within miles; all around was the Lybian Desert; far distant was an Arab encampment; the setting sun gilded the high peaks of the hills, throwing the shadow of the temples across the plain; and I reached my boat overcome by melancholy reflections on the mutability of all human greatness and the perishable nature of even the most enduring works of human genius". Back in Cairo after an absence of three months he found a new fascination in its Mohammedan architecture. To visit the mosques he had to wear Turkish dress; and he reflected, as he had his whiskers shaved off: "This is too bad; but having taken such a long journey I must not stick at trifles." He was granted permission to visit the mosques on condition that he did not desecrate them with brushes made of hog's bristles.

He was disturbed to hear that Jerusalem had been plague-ridden for three months and that a cordon had been placed round the city; but none the less he set out for Syria. His provision for this part of his travels included a gay tent, water-skins, pewter dishes and a brace of Turkish pistols. "Imagine me mounted on my camel, my black servant on another, and two men with my tent and luggage; the two men similarly furnished and accoutred, surrounded by a host of the children of the desert—the wild Arabs; and you will have an idea of what an Eastern monarch I am", he wrote to his daughter. So the party followed the path of the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt, until Mount Sinai burst on their sight in all the grandeur of its towering naked rock. They stayed at the convent of St Catherine, at the foot of the mountain, where Mohammedans and Christians followed their differing religious exercises side by side. Roberts made a remarkable drawing of this convent in its grand and desolate situation (see opposite page). From there they went by the shore of the Red Sea to Petra, which astonished and bewildered the artist, and so on to Hebron. They arrived at Jerusalem on Good Friday, 1839, the very day on which the city was freed from quarantine. Roberts went on northwards to Nazareth and the Dead Sea, and then in Syria fell under the spell of the classical architecture of the immense remains of Baalbec.

The chief fruit of his incessant activity during his absence of eleven months was the six-volume publication called *Roberts' Sketches in the Holy Land, Syria and Egypt*. It was the heyday of the reproduction of topographical

drawings by lithography, and Roberts' volumes acknowledge no superior within that sumptuous class. His sketches were transcribed onto the stone with striking fidelity by the Belgian, Louis Haghe, and coloured by hand for each copy. The plates unfold a progressive and stirring panorama of Ancient Egypt, 'Modern' Cairo, Petra, Jerusalem, the plains of Galilee and the ruins of Baalbec.

After rising to these heights it was some time before Roberts could adjust his vision to the European scene; a visit to Brittany and Normandy failed to arouse any enthusiasm in him. When, by Royal command, he attempted to paint the opening of the Crystal Palace, a friend admonished him: "Never for a moment forget that you have carried our hearts and souls to those holy fields. . . . Having done so great a deed modern garishness is beyond you." But Venice and Rome gave him new subjects, and when he died in 1864 he was carrying out his unceasing search for the picturesque where it lay nearest to hand, in London seen from the banks of the Thames. Of this attempt he wrote "Should my pictures survive to the period when that New Zealander is to stand on the ruins of London Bridge and survey the very little left of London he may still find in some National Gallery, far away maybe in Timbuctoo, a representation of what London once was". So far as I know none of Roberts' London scenes have yet achieved this safe dispersion in the interests of future historians.

Roberts always made a point of visiting little-known places; he went to Spain because Moorish architecture was unfamiliar here and to Egypt because the only views of that country before his time were made by French artists and were said to be inaccurate and incomplete. He had his reward, not only in the success of the paintings and publications he based on his sketches, but also in the visual education he gave to a wide and growing public. Very many of the Egyptian illustrations of the late 19th century and more recent times are traceable back to the plates of which a few are reproduced here; and the Bible illustrations which are a familiar feature of the Sunday School class owe not a little to his pioneering journey.

There is perhaps always a suggestion of the theatre in the work of David Roberts; but it is for this reason that he is so expressive in the dramatic presentation of architecture. His drawings of Ancient Egypt point the full and terrifying contrast between the magnitude and magnificence of the monuments of that civilization, and the desert sands which surround and smother them in their ruin.



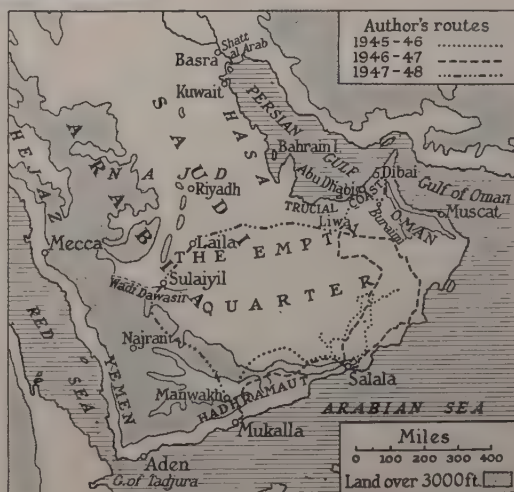
# Wolves of the Desert

## The Sa'ar Tribe at the Watering Place

by WILFRED  
THESIGER, D.S.O.

*The Geographical Magazine Trust Fund has contributed a substantial sum towards the cost of Mr Thesiger's journeys across the Empty Quarter of Southern Arabia, during one of which the encounter herein described took place. (Left) A Sa'ar tribesman: of a clan "hated and feared by all the South Arabian desert tribes"*

IN December 1947 I arrived at Manwakh, the watering centre for the Sa'ar Tribe. From here I planned to cross the western sands to the Wadi Dawasir. For the past three years I had wandered in the Empty Quarter with the Ruashid, the most nomadic of all the Bedu tribes, and four of them were my comrades on this present venture; but even the far-ranging Ruashid knew nothing of these western wastes. Only from among the Sa'ar could we hope to find the guide whom we required, for they have crossed these 400 waterless miles to harry the Bedu of the north. A large and powerful tribe, they have aptly been described as the wolves of the desert. They have raided eastward as far as the Oman steppes and northward to the Persian Gulf, and are hated and feared by all the South Arabian desert tribes. From the



A. J. Thornton



Hadhramaut we had crossed the Sa'ar plateau to this last well upon the desert's edge, where we had heard that Bin Maiqal and his Bin Ma'aruf section of the Sa'ar were camped. Normally he and his clan lived in the desert around Najran, and of recent years they had acknowledged Ibn Saud as their overlord; but they had been involved in a raid upon the Yam and had fled south to seek refuge among their kinsmen from the animosity of that great tribe and the wrath of Ibn Saud. The desert was full of fear and everywhere the talk was of raids and counter-raids, of deaths and of looted stock.

In the sharp cold of the winter's morning we rode down the valley beyond the well, past the milch herds of the Bin Ma'aruf. The herdboys had just driven them forth to graze from their couching-place around the tents, and my companions spoke appreciatively of their condition, calling each other's attention to their finer points. The Sa'ar had news of our approach, for a party of them had ridden

past our stopping-place at sunset the day before. Now as we drew near they assembled to receive us and greeted us as is the Bedu custom by firing low over our heads. Then drawing their daggers they swept down on us in a wild yelling mob while we fought to control our startled camels. Dismounting we greeted each of them in turn, and after joining the coffee circle exchanged our news in the traditional Bedu formula. A dish of dates was then set before us and a young lad moved round the ever-growing circle, pouring out to each in turn the customary sips of bitter black cardamom-flavoured coffee.

Sitting among them were visitors from neighbouring tribes, who had come here to discuss truces and blood-money, and some of them I had met before. The names of many of the Sa'ar were also familiar to me, for I had heard them repeated again and again, in tales of skirmishes and bloodshed, while on the march and in desert camps. Every man and boy among these tribesmen held a rifle in his

*The author came upon an encampment of Bin Ma'aruf Sa'ar when he arrived at Manwakh to prepare for a journey of sixteen waterless days across Arabia's Empty Quarter. The well here, which is stone-lined and over 200 feet deep, is one of the only two permanent watering places in Sa'ar territory*





(Above) One of the small black Arab tents pitched near Manwakh well. This type belongs exclusively to sand-dwelling tribes and is never used on the steppes or plateaux. Beside the tent stands its owner, who wears the long pointed sleeves of a Western Arab; in front, placed upside-down, is a leather trough from which his camels are watered. Round the Manwakh encampment romped Arab children, a hardy lot: even in winter months, when the desert cold is intense, the little girls wear (left) only a fringe round their hips. The children are fed mainly on camels' milk and porridge or bread made of millet obtained from the more sedentary sections of the Sa'ar tribe





*New arrivals at Manwakh. These camel litters are peculiar to the Bin Ma'aruf section of the Sa'ar and to other sand-dwelling Arabs; in them the women (some veiled and all wearing black) and infants travel during the march, which is usually very leisurely, being conditioned by such grazing as can be found for the camels*





hand and all wore the distinctive carnelian-studded dagger, and one and all impressed me as virile, reckless and uncontrolled, but humorous and friendly. While we sat among them talking there was a sudden stir, for they had noticed a dozen mounted Arabs approaching rapidly across the dunes. Then someone recognized one of the camels and they relaxed. These camels were stretched out and travelling very fast, yet were urged to even greater efforts by the wild yells of their riders. They were the scouts, sons of sheikhs and the very pick of the tribe, who set out each dawn to scour the surrounding desert, keen-eyed for the tracks of strangers. Lithe, hard-bodied and alert, these lads rode their splendid beasts with effortless mastery. They had heard the firing and, thinking the camp attacked, had ridden back to help.

Scattered upon the dunes around us were small black tents, round which naked infants romped, while dark-clad women moved about gathering sticks and tending herds of goats. Sometimes a family changed its site, for, though fear of raiders had imposed upon them the need to keep together, their restless nomad instincts drove them to constant movement within the wide confines of the camp. Such short migrations provided an interesting sight as they moved slowly past. The children drove the camels, laden with tents, cooking-pots, watering-troughs and ropes, the simple requirements of their life; while the Bedu mothers and the virgin beauties of the tribe rode in the slow swaying camel-litters.

That evening they feasted us on meat and, after the camel herds had drifted in at dusk, brought us great frothing bowls of milk, the nectar of the Arabs. The night was filled with the haunting sounds of an Arab camp—the ceaseless restless moaning of camels, the barking of dogs, the rise and fall of Arab voices from their gathering-places round the fires, and sometimes the distant harmony of song. Next morning when the sun was warm we drove our camels across the sandy plain to water at the well, which is situated close under high limestone cliffs on the northern edge of the valley. A few Arabs had already arrived and were fastening their pulleys to the scaffolding around the well. It is over 200 feet in depth and stone-lined, a monument to some forgotten people in the dim past. At the deep wells in the Najd the Arabs use their

*Abdallah Bin Nura, Sheikh of the Bin Ma'aruf, plaits a rope for use at Manwakh well. Bedu sheiks do not think it beneath their dignity to help with watering and other everyday tasks*





(Above) Watering at Manwakh well. The ropes, at either end of which a leather bucket hangs, run over pulleys attached to scaffolding above the well, and the water is invariably raised by hand—never by camels, as in the Najd. The well-ropes (made of palm-fronds), pulleys, buckets and troughs are brought down to the well by each family, and taken away after watering is complete. There was always an impatient crowd of Arabs and a milling throng of camels round the well, which was usually exhausted by midday. (Right) To Arab women falls the duty of filling the goatskins used for carrying water in the desert





camels to draw up the water, but the southern Bedu always lift it by hand. They fasten a leather bucket, holding about four gallons, to either end of the rope which runs over the pulley, so that as one bucket is drawn up full the other descends empty. Men and women draw together on the well-ropes, four or five to each rope, singing in chorus as they work. We had not been here long before the camel herds arrived and the serious work of watering began. Great leather troughs supported on crossed wooden hoops were set up by each family around the well. Soon there was no room for more watering parties, and late-comers had to wait their turn. The buckets rose and fell and were tipped into the troughs about which the thirsty camels pushed and thrust while their calves frolicked around. Shouting herdboys, stripped to the waist, ran in and out among them, driving away camels which did not belong to them, and restraining the more impatient of their own. Others scratched the hind-quarters of their favourite beasts, while they sang them their watering songs to induce them to drink deep. When they had drunk they were couched nearby, to be watered again later in the day, before being driven back to pasturage. Round the well-mouth women filled their water-skins, which then lay swollen and quivering upon the ground, guarded from the trampling feet of the camels by shrill-voiced little girls, clad only in a leather fringe around their waists. Few of the women were veiled and all joined freely in the constant jests and laughter. Among them was a tall girl of startling beauty. She had come down to the well early in the day, carrying a water-skin and accompanied by her young sister. The centre of a happy laughing group of lads, she dallied here till the evening.

A family of Sa'ar from off the mountains were camped under an overhanging cliff nearby, and they bade us join them and drink coffee. Kinsmen of the Bin Ma'aruf, they yet differed from them in their dress and way of life. They wore indigo-dyed loincloths and wraps around their shoulders, as is the fashion among the Southern Bedu, whereas the Bin Ma'aruf were clad like the Northern Arabs in long white shirts whose pointed sleeves fell nearly to the ground. They were returning to their homes in Raidat al Sa'ar, a two days' journey to the south. Floodcrops of sorghum and beans are grown there in a shallow valley, guarded by numerous stone-built forts and watch-towers, which look out across the desolate rocky plateau. Raidat is seldom visited by other Arabs, for it is the very stronghold of the Sa'ar, who have an evil reputation for

treachery. This is probably a slander, inspired by the constant enmity which characterizes their relations with their neighbours; but they certainly deserve their reputation for godlessness, for they never fast nor pray, declaring that the Prophet gave their forefathers exemption from both.

We now sat looking down on the busy scene around the well, and those Arabs who had finished watering strolled over and joined us. They asked us what we thought of their herds, and were soon deep in technicalities with my companions. They spoke of individual camels owned by Arabs four or five hundred miles away, of the different breeds, their milk yields and powers of endurance, of prices in Dhofar, Najran and on the Trucial Coast, of pasturage, and of camels taken in raids on other tribes. We heard details of the recent raid upon the Yam and of how Mabkhaut, nicknamed the Cat, had remained behind to hold up the pursuit and had been killed when his rifle jammed. He had been the greatest raider in the southern desert and his exploits and daring were legendary among the tribes. I had known him well, for he had guided us the year before from Salala to Dhofar. They spoke of raids across the waterless eastern steppes, and among the giant dunes to the north. They told of pursuits and battles in the dark, of ruthless killings, of blood-feuds and murder. They mentioned famous guides, and waterholes and routes across the sands, where the oryx herds still roamed. Meanwhile, a young lad had blown up the embers of the fire and set the long-necked coffee pot to boil. His uncovered hair fell to his naked shoulders and framed an impish laughing face. Our elderly host had roasted the coffee beans and passed them round for us to sniff, before pounding them up in a wooden mortar and putting them in the pot. He flavoured his coffee with crushed ginger as is the custom in the Hadhramaut. He also gave us parched grain and beans to eat; all that he had with him, for on such simple fare do the Bedu travel.

We lingered with them till the sun was nearly set and then descended past the well, deserted now, except for a bent old woman and two small children, who were loading the last of their water-skins on a young and restive camel. Tomorrow there would be the endless bargaining for camels and arguments with prospective guides, and ahead of us lay all the hardships and difficulties of the desert crossing. But my companions were content, and being happy in the present broke into song as they approached the camp-fires through the dusk.